A Celebration of Life

✝

Dr. Shelby Matthew Givens, Ph.D.

1938 ~ 2015

Services Held:
Saturday, July 11, 2015 at 11:00 a.m.

Skyline Community Church
United Church of Christ
12540 Skyline Boulevard
Oakland, Ca 94619

Biography of Life

Birth: *Shelby was born January 10, 1938 in Midland, Texas to Pastor Essie Givens and the late Bishop Edgar N. Givens. Shelby was raised in Plainview, Texas where he was actively involved in his father's church, Emmanuel Church of God in Christ serving the Plainview community. He worked on the Jr. Usher Board and sang in the choir.*

Early Years: *During the Depression, living in Plainview, times were hard but Shelby and his three brothers were very enterprising. They performed odd jobs, caddied at the local golf course, and shined shoes to earn wages. Young Shelby demonstrated that he was an excellent student and had a natural gift for handling business. He was actively involved in school sports and activities. He was reliable, responsible, and intelligent. By the time he was 13, he was managing the weigh scales down at the cotton fields for local cotton farmers, worked as a time keeper, bookkeeper and, record keeper for the field laborers.*

Education: *In search of higher education, Shelby left home with his parents' blessing at age 14 to live with family members in Las Vegas, Nevada to attend junior high school and begin high school. He then moved to San Jose, CA to live with his oldest brother, Edgar and finish high school. He then went on to attend San Jose City College and then San Jose State University, where, in 1961, he received a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Psychology. In 1967 he received a Master's Degree in Sociology from San Jose State University. Finally, he was accepted into a Ph.D. program at the University of California, Berkeley where he began pursuing his doctorate in Cultural Anthropology in 1970. In 1984, Shelby completed his dissertation and received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from U.C. Berkeley.*

Marriage and Family: *On December 27th 1961, he was joined in holy matrimony to the greatest love of his life, Odia Mae Coates of Los Angeles, CA. Odia and Shelby were blessed with their first child in March of 1963, a daughter they named Odette La Jeune. In 1970, Shelby relocated his family from San Jose, CA to Oakland, CA while he was working towards his Ph.D. In March of 1972, Shelby and Odia welcomed their second child, also a daughter, and they named her Ayoka Kilolo.*

To complete his doctorate in Cultural Anthropology, Shelby chose to research the Aluku Maroons of French Guyana and Surinam in South America. So, shortly after the birth of his second daughter, Shelby traveled to French Guyana and lived in an Aluku village deep in the Amazon rainforest for two years. During his time there he became fluent in the local language, and immersed himself in the amazing history and rich cultural traditions of the Aluku Maroons. Over the years, in the course of his research, Shelby became a greatly loved and respected member of the Aluku people. During the time he spent in Suriname and French Guyana since the 1970's, Shelby has made lifelong friends and became part of a larger community that has embraced him and his family and redefined the concept of brotherhood.

Career and Activism: *Shelby had a passion for education throughout his life. He believed in taking advantage of opportunities to learn and enrich one's awareness and understanding of life. His desire to share information, knowledge, wisdom were all part of his ministry to mentor, teach, share, illuminate and even trigger personal growth. From being a Sunday School teacher at Prayer Garden Church of God In Christ in San Jose in the 60's, to teaching 5th 6th 7th and 8th grade at Hope Academy in Oakland and teaching teens to grow organic produce in a community garden in South Richmond in the late 80's, he continued to demonstrate his commitment to education and mentorship.*

After he received his Ph.D., he worked for the University of California as the Director and Regional Director of the MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science achievement) Program and also as the Assistant Director of the Urban Community-School Collaborative where he initiated programs that integrated the nine University of California campuses with community-based organizations and elementary schools.

In 2000, Shelby retired from the University of California and was chosen to be the new Country Director for the Peace Corps in Suriname (the second greatest love of his life). When he returned to the United States 3 years later, he moved to Stockton, CA to be near his lovely daughters and beautiful granddaughter, Shelby Renee.

Hobbies: *Playing Golf, watching NFL and NBA games and READING!!!!*

Passing: *Shelby Matthew Givens passed away peacefully at home in Stockton, CA on June 23, 2015. The surviving members of his natal family include his mother, Pastor Essie Renee Givens of Plainview, Texas, and siblings: Cathryn Givens-Tolson of San Francisco, California, Sandra Givens-Franklin of Plainview, Texas, and Don Oliver Givens of Daly City, California, and a host of nieces and nephews and extended family.*

Shelby's two daughters Ayoka Kilolo Givens and Odette La Jeune Givens, and his grand-daughter, Shelby Renee Givens reside in Stockton, California.

Shelby's God-Daughter, Veronica J. Belt also resides in Stockton, California with her husband, Reverend John Hope Belt, and her son, Christopher Robinson.

Interment:
Private

Order of Services

Master of Ceremony ..... *Carole Ward-Allen*

Introduction to a Celebration

Scripture Reading ..... *Rev. Anton R. Dixon*
Psalm 23

Invocation ..... *Rev. ElTyna McCree*

Musical Selection ..... *Veronica Belt*

Acknowledgments ..... *Beverly White-Macklin*

Tributes ..... *Benjamin Tucker*
Humphrey Polanen
Rev. Sean Franklin

Musical Selection ..... *Brenda Roy*

Reflections ..... *Pastor Essie R. Givens*
Ayoka K. Givens
Odette L. Givens

Musical Selection ..... *Special Guest*

Words of Life ..... *Dr. John H. Belt*

Closing Instrumental Selection .....

I Feel Something Drawing Me Home

We are nearing the shores of that fair Canaan land
Where peace and joy hold full dominion grand
Where everyone's so happy and as free as a bird
Where no sobbing, no sighing or complaints are ever heard.

Oh yes, I feel something drawing
I feel it pulling
I know it's urging
I feel something drawing me home.

There is something so divine
Down in this heart of mine.

I feel something drawing me home
I feel something drawing me home.

I can feel the heavenly pull
My cup of joy overflows
yes I feel something drawing me home.

We Thank You

A Native American quote that states
"The day you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced.
Live your life so that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice".
The family of Dr. Shelby Givens wishes to say thank you to
everyone who sent a card, called with a comforting word, sent food
or monetary donations, perhaps a beautiful floral arrangement or
donated your time to help the family through this difficult time.
We all feel truly blessed to have had Shelby in our lives and we cry for our loss
but rejoice that his new place is forever in the presence of God.